

Sir Robert Sparkes letter to Stuart McDonald, 27 July 1987
(Chapter 16, p. 190)

Dear Mr MacDonald (*sic*)

I have received notification of a meeting of the Federal Management Committee of the Party to be held tomorrow and I note the agenda includes discussion of Federal Election results.

Regrettably neither the Senior Vice President nor I am able to be present for reasons already conveyed. I think it is most unfortunate that these matters should be dealt with at a meeting called at such short notice which precludes our giving an accurate report on results in Queensland, bearing in mind the serious misrepresentation of those results which have been published in the media.

As you would no doubt appreciate the Australian Electoral Commission does not commence distribution of Senate preferences until Tuesday 28th instant and accordingly, our Secretariat will be monitoring the distribution of these preferences at that time. Therefore we would not be in a position to provide any reliable assessment of the results of the election until after all results have been finalised.

Also I understand the meeting will discuss the subject of possible Coalition relationships with the Liberal Party.

As you would be well aware, this matter was canvassed at length at the most recent meeting of the Party's Federal Council, at which it was resolved: That the National Party does not enter into an agreement of Coalition in Opposition.

The powers of the Federal Management Committee are set out in clause 12 of the Constitution of the Party. They are delegated powers in relation to the day to day management of the Party's affairs. They do not include the determination of major issues of policy, such as formation of a Coalition, and in any event it is not competent for the Federal Management Committee to reach any conclusion on this, or indeed any other, matter different to that reached by the Federal Council. Constitutional propriety requires that any modification of the Party's position from that determined at the recent Federal Council Meeting should occur at a further meeting of the Full Federal Council.

In any event, the Federal Management Committee is not fully constituted since a Leader of the Party in the Senate has yet to be appointed.

In these circumstances, it would, in my view, be inappropriate for Federal Management Committee to meet and determine any attitude in relation to any possible Coalition with the Liberal Party prior to a meeting of the Federal Council.

Accordingly, I would urge the Federal Management Committee to call a special meeting of Federal Council as soon as practicable to deal with these matters in depth.